



17 February 1982

007-1367-82

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Soviet-Supported Destabilizing Activities in the Third World

The Soviets and those associated with the Soviets have, in the past year, actively pumped arms, money, and other forms of assistance (such as training) into many Third World areas which are already seething with domestic discontent. In part because of these actions, the threat to US interests in the less developed part of the world rose appreciably. The increasing availability of money, training, and weapons coincided with and may have even helped stimulate two trends which directly endanger US diplomats and businessmen and indirectly undercut the viability of many moderate governments which the US supports: opposition groups in LDCs are turning to violence more frequently and the number of sovereign governments willing and able to support armed opposition against others as a foreign policy tool is also rising. The US must now concern itself with the support to externally-directed political violence provided by Libya, Iran, Iraq, Syria, South Yemen, Nicaragua, and Ethiopia in addition to our traditional concern with the activities of the Soviet Union and Cuba.

Soviet Military Assistance to the Third World

Moscow has sold and given away some \$55 billion worth of arms and military assistance to the Third World since the OPEC oil price hikes of the mid-1970s. This is four times the amount the Soviet Union committed during the previous decades. Three-quarters of recent arms sales and grants went to Middle East/ North African states, as the Kremlin moved swiftly to accommodate ambitious Arab rearmament plans drawn up following the 1973 Middle East war. Soviet military presence in the Third World increased in tandem with the rise in arms transfers--more than 15,000 Soviet military advisors and technicians were stationed in non-Communist LDCs last year, nearly a 100 percent augmentation since 1975.

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Although Soviet arms commitments to the Third World last year slipped to about one-half the record level set in 1980 (\$13-\$15 billion), large new orders from a few major Middle Eastern and African customers kept the 1981 estimated total well above the 1974-79 annual average. Most of Moscow's key military equipment buyers stayed out of the market last year either to absorb large delivery backlogs from orders placed in 1978-80, or because of strained relations with the Kremlin--as in the case of Iraq. Even so, huge order backlogs guarantees a record, or near record level of Soviet arms deliveries through the early 1980s.

In addition to a continued strong volume of equipment transfers, a growing percentage will comprise more advanced and sophisticated weapons system, including some still unavailable to East European armed forces inventories.

Libya

Libya is by far the USSR's largest arms client, having purchased over \$10 billion of military material since the 1973 Middle East war. About half of the total purchases have been delivered and include a wide variety of advanced ground forces weapons, fighter aircraft, air defense systems, and naval vessels. Deliveries are expected to continue at a high rate over the next several years and probably will include even more advanced weapons than provided thus far. These arms probably will be accompanied by an increase in the Soviet military presence in Libya--currently estimated at several thousand advisors and technicians.

In supplying Libya with large quantities of modern arms, Moscow has overlooked political differences for economic and political gains. Aside from large hard currency earnings, the Soviets have acquired access to Libyan port facilities for merchant vessels, gradually expanded the number of technicians, and developed a viable working relationship with the Libyan leadership. Moscow has supplied material far in excess of Libya's legitimate defense needs, thus providing most of the wherewithal for Qadhafi's role as an arms supplier to other states and to insurgents.

Since the signing of the Camp David accords in September 1978, Libya has sharply increased military assistance to Third World clients. In the three years ending December 1981, he has provided more than \$500 million worth of weapons and funds to buy arms. Qadhafi now provides aid to more than 60 insurgent and dissident groups, as well as supporting selected governments. An increasingly important facet of his program is training, including more than 10,000 insurgents and dissidents. Thousands of troops have also been sent to Libya, and Qadhafi gives certain clients more advanced,

specialized training. Qadhafi provides assistance free-of-charge.

Qadhafi has focused his efforts on supporting insurgents and dissidence in the Middle East and Africa. Important recipients of Libyan aid have included:

- radical and more moderate Palestinians;
- North African insurgents, dissidents, and
- selected sub-Saharan guerrillas.

Although these and other movements have received much less materiel than Qadhafi's government clients (in value terms), Libyan-provided weapons have helped a number of such groups tie down government forces and promote instability. Training has made a similar contribution to these groups, most of which have very limited capabilities.

A handful of governments accounted for the bulk of Libyan arms transfers and monetary disbursements. Syria, and more recently Iran, have accounted for the majority of such support. Qadhafi also has provided aid to several sub-Saharan countries. While governments have been the main recipients of weapons and money, they generally have sent only small numbers of troops to Libya for training. Their unwillingness to be associated with Qadhafi and his reputation as an unreliable supplier have hindered aid flows.

Cuba

Cuba, whose military force is undergoing a major modernization by the Soviets, now has the largest military establishment in the western hemisphere, save those of the US and Brazil. Soviet military deliveries to Cuba in 1981 reached their highest level since the 1962 Cuban missile crisis. Soviet merchant arms carriers discharged more than 60,000 tons of military equipment at Cuban ports, a three-fold increase over the annual average observed during the past decade. The accelerated pace of deliveries, coupled with the inclusion of more advanced hardware systems has substantially upgraded Cuba's air, ground, and naval capabilities. Its Air Force now has some 200 Soviet-supplied MiG jet fighters, its Navy has two torpedo attack submarines and a Koni-class frigate, and its Army has been converted from a predominantly home defense force into a formidable power relative to its Latin American neighbors. Cuba's recent combat experience in Angola and Ethiopia, together with its overwhelming qualitative and numerical superiority in weapons holdings, provide it with a particularly ominous intervention capability in the

Caribbean, especially if Cuban forces could operate from friendly soil in Central America.

Cuba is clearly not the sole source of violence and instability in the Caribbean Basin, but its activities militarize and internationalize what would otherwise be local conflicts. Examination of Cuban actions in that arena, and to some extent, more broadly in Latin America, indicate that it has turned sharply away from its 1970s policy of strengthening normal diplomatic relations to one of promoting armed insurgencies. Cuba's most immediate goals are to exploit and control the revolution in Nicaragua and to induce the overthrow of the governments of El Salvador and Guatemala. At the same time, the Cuban government is providing advice, safehaven, communications, training and some financial support to several violent South American organizations. Training in Cuban camps has been provided in the last two years, for example, to groups from Uruguay, Chile, Haiti, Jamaica, the Dominican Republic, Grenada, Colombia, Honduras, Costa Rica, and Guatemala, in addition to more publicized training for combatants from Nicaragua and El Salvador.

Nicaragua

The predominant supporter of Nicaragua has, of course, been Cuba. Since July 1979 some 5,000 Cuban advisors, teachers, and medical personnel have been at work at all levels of the Nicaraguan society. Of this number, more than 1500 military and security advisors are providing combat training and instruction in intelligence and counter intelligence activities, security protection for top Nicaraguan leaders and advice on organizing the police force. In addition, Nicaragua has received within the past year approximately \$28 million worth of military equipment from the USSR, Eastern Europe, and Cuba. Some training for Nicaraguans has also been made available by the PLO.

Cuban influence in Nicaragua is now so great that it can be used as launching platform for insurgency in the rest of Central America. Guerrillas from neighboring countries are now trained in Nicaragua by Cubans and the Cuban Ambassador to Nicaragua frequently meets with other Central American insurgents in Managua to advise them on tactics and strategy. Individual Sandinista leaders have participated in such meetings and have met independently with Guatemalan and Salvadoran guerrillas. The Sandinistas also have cooperated in a joint effort by Cuba and Palestinian groups to provide military training in the Mideast to selected Latin American radical leftists. Finally, between October 1980 and February 1981, Nicaragua was the staging site for a massive Cuban-directed flow of arms to Salvadoran guerrillas. Arms continue to flow through Nicaragua to insurgents in El Salvador and Guatemala.

Ethiopia, Vietnam and Others

Other major recipients of Soviet assistance also have been especially active in the past year in fomenting trouble in their regions. Last August, for example, Ethiopia, Libya, and South Yemen signed a military alliance ostensibly aimed at "imperialist" forces in the Near East-Horn of Africa region. The major points of agreement among the participants are their hostility toward the moderate governments of Somalia and Sudan, close relations with Moscow, and concern over US military interest in the Persian Gulf region. In terms of direct action, the Ethiopians and Libyans, even before the pact, funded the Somali Salvation Front, a dissident group fighting against the Somali government. That government also faces sporadic border harassment from Ethiopian units, which have staged occasional air strikes and made overflights of Somali territory.

Vietnam continues to create major regional tensions not only by occupying Kampuchea, which alarms its ASEAN neighbors, but also by prompting a vast migration of refugees. Since the spring of 1975, more than two million persons have fled Indochina. This exodus has constituted by far the greatest refugee problem in East Asia, has created a major threat to regional stability, and has involved the rest of the world in costly life-saving and resettlement efforts.

Revolutionary Violence

Foreign-backed insurgency and terrorism--feeding off of and contributing to increasing political instability in many LDCs--is likely to grow over the next few years. In part this will occur because countries such as Libya, although they have had relatively little success in actually installing the groups they back in power, have had considerable success in creating major difficulties for the moderate governments they oppose. This appearance of accomplishment, together with a few real victories of the radical left as in Nicaragua, will probably encourage several states (including the Soviet Union) to continue to support revolutionary violence as a foreign policy tool. The direct impact on the US of this rise in political violence is two-fold. First, the terrorist danger to US persons and facilities will probably grow because terrorism tends to be contagious as groups seek to emulate each other as attacks, even those that fail, receive publicity. Second, if revolutionary violence spreads, the chances will increase that a state of vital strategic importance to the US will become a target. One major consequence of the development of serious instability in

these countries of high importance to the US is that, even if the government is not overthrown, the turmoil created could be sufficient to drastically cut the flow of oil or other resources from these countries. That prospect alone might be enough to tempt the Soviets or other anti-US regimes, such as Libya or Iran, to take advantage of existing discontent to provoke disorders in these areas.

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Third World

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